

**Students' Attitude in Using  
First-Person Reference Addressing Terms  
Of *Aku* and *Saya* to Lecturers**

**THESIS**

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Sarjana Pendidikan**



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# STUDENTS' ATTITUDE IN USING FIRST-PERSON REFERENCE ADDRESSING TERMS OF *AKU* AND *SAYA* TO LECTURERS

## Abstract

In Indonesia, first-person reference addressing terms of *aku* and *saya* ("I") has since long embodied an unwritten social convention where students should address their lecturers using *saya* prescriptively. However in recent years, self-reference choice seems to have undergone a shift of paradigm where many students use *aku* instead of *saya* while communicating with their lecturers (Djenar, 2007). This research, therefore, attempts to investigate English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University students' attitude in using first-person reference addressing terms of *aku* and *saya* to the lecturers. The data obtained in this study was collected using questionnaire in form of close-ended, open-ended, and multiple response set with 90 participants from 2012 batch of English Department students. To explore further, the researcher also obtained the data through short semi-structured interview. The analysis of the data showed that the majority of the students still use *saya* exclusively. However, there were also significant numbers of students who use both *aku* and *saya* with their lecturers. In regard to those who use both *aku* and *saya*, the factors which influence their chosen self-reference were as follows: relationship, habit, setting, and age difference.

**Key words:** *aku* and *saya*, terms of address, self-reference, shift of language choice, politeness, formality, habit, setting, relationship with lecturers, age difference.

## INTRODUCTION

When people are communicating with each other, language and variance are very closely related. In terms of addressing, people also have different ways to referring themselves in formal and informal way (Djenar, 2007; Dewi, 2008; Flannery, 2010). Indonesian language also has some different ways that are used to express the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, especially in terms of self-referencing oneself to other people. Indonesian speakers have several choices for saying 'I'. Indonesian language has two terms referring to the first person '*aku*' and '*saya*' which are used differently depending on people's relationship and also their age difference or status. This is very different from the English system of self- and addressee-reference which commonly draws on a limited set of pronouns (Flannery, 2009). In this case, the terms of address to refer as "I" in Indonesian language is an important feature to be paid an attention.

Furthermore, previous study (Djenar, 2007) shows that even within a social group characterized by its "shared concern with individualism", there is no uniformity in the speakers' choice of self-referencing themselves. Some speakers consistently use one term, while others select between two or more terms within the same interview. Although previous



finding has found such results, it is necessary for other researchers to study this topic further, as there is only limited research related to this topic. Furthermore, the researcher is intrigued to discuss about the topic further as it is still under researched.

In education setting in Indonesia, especially in university level, it is often heard that many students tend to use *aku* instead of *saya* when they address themselves in front of the lecturers, regardless of their relationship. Basically, the relationship between students and their teachers should be included in a respectful relationship as teachers are the people whose position and status are higher than those of the students, therefore, formal language style is the most appropriate choice to be used.

As we can see from this relationship, a student should use *saya* to address himself / herself to the teacher. However, upon a closer inspection, there seems to be a phenomenon of different code selection where the application of the word *saya* changes into *aku* in the communication between students and their lecturers.

This study is significant because seeing from the facts above, the researcher attempts to seek an answer as to why students tend to use the word '*aku*' instead of '*saya*' to refer themselves with the lecturers. Seeing from the issue, the researcher attempts to answer the research question: 'What are the students' attitudes in referring themselves as "*aku*" or "*saya*" in English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University?'

In conclusion, this study examines the students' attitudes toward the code selection phenomenon in ED SWCU in referring themselves as *aku* or *saya* to their lecturers. By conducting this study, the researcher hopes that the results obtained could get more information on the current uses of "*aku*" and "*saya*". Furthermore, this study can also raise university students' awareness toward the appropriateness usage of self-reference *aku* and *saya* toward the lecturers in conversing with each other.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Code Selection in Terms of Address**

The issue of different addressing terms has, over the last three decades, captured the interest of those who are engaged in sociolinguistics area. Mogi (2002) stated that ever since Brown and Gilman's (1960) study, sociolinguists have been intrigued with the use of addressing

terms in various settings such as in the scope of academic, working place, and politics. Today, the process of globalization seems to make some impacts toward the use of code selection around the world. Mogi (2002) further stated that in Holmes (1992), code switching happens when a speaker shifts their language from one language to another.

Holmes (2001) and Bonvillian (2013) proposed a theory that there are some factors influencing the different code selection by the interlocutors such as setting – the place of event/conversation, participants – the speaker and listener, topic – what is being talked about, and goal of the conversation. Holmes (2001) also described that the closer the relationship between participants, the more informal the language and content of conversation used. Hence, it should be noted that an important aspect of communicating is knowing the different status between interlocutors, as it may influence the choice of address terms for self-reference and addressee-reference.

In daily interactions, terms of address can represent politeness of a speaker and his interlocutors. According to Afful (2007, p. 179), “address forms also represent very fundamental means of forging human interaction, thus performing an interpersonal role”. Therefore, it is important to fully understand what is meant by terms of address before we go any further. Parkinson (1985, p. 1) in Qin (2008) describes that terms of address is defined loosely as words used from one person to refer to the addressee in a speech event. It can be extremely important conveyors of social information. Similarly, Afful (2006a: 81) in Moghadam et al. (2013) also believed that terms of address are an essential part of language attitude, specifically in terms of behavior, in which “the behavior, norms and practices of a society can be identified.” To Oyetade (1995) in Afful (2007, p. 180), addressing terms refer to “an expression used in a face-to-face situation to designate and addressee”. Furthermore, Wardhaugh (2006, p. 269) also points out that the use of names and address terms is often a clear indicator of “a power differential” between interlocutors. They establish the relative power and distance of speaker and hearer (Wood and Kroger, 1991). In general, it can be concluded that forms of address is words used between interlocutors to refer to oneself and often indicates differential of power and distance between the addresser and the addressee.

In this paper, “terms of address” will only refer to the first person reference in Indonesian language (i.e. the use of *aku* and *saya* to refer as me in Indonesian language) as self-reference will be the main concern to be discussed in the study. Seeing from the reason above, this research intends to seek an answer about the students’ attitude in using the expression *aku* and *saya*, based on the formal or standard use of personal pronoun *aku* and

*saya*, i.e. *saya* for formal relationship and *aku* for informal relationship. Thus, the researcher will look upon the issue of the formal and informal way of ED students when addressing themselves in front of the lecturers.

### **The formal and informal account of first-person references *Aku* and *Saya***

As opposite to English, where modern first-person references seem to be limited with the pronoun “I” or “me”, Indonesian language differs quite significantly because it has “an open pronoun system” (Thomason & Everett, 2005, p. 307) that allows expressions for self-references to be represented by various first-person pronouns such as *saya*, *aku*, the hokkien-derived pronoun *gue*, *tak*, *kita*, as well as personal names and kin terms (Djenar, 2007, p. 23). In more recent studies done by Djenar (2007) and Dewi (2008), it is stated that the relationship between students and teachers are considered to be formal as there is a clear difference in their age, group, and especially status. Thus, personal pronoun *saya* should be used instead of *aku* because of the reasons above. As stated by Dewi (2008), “The assumption is that students would use *saya* when speaking to their teachers” (p. 4). It is generally accepted that *aku* is informal and *saya* is more polite because the pronoun *saya* creates a sense of politeness, respect, and non-offensiveness in addressing oneself to another. This argument is also proposed by Mintz (1994) in Djenar (2007, p. 25) who claimed, “Formality is suggested as corresponding to neutrality; and neutrality as corresponding to non offensiveness”. According to these descriptions, informal pronouns are not neutral, in the sense that by using them, a speaker may inadvertently offend the addressee. *Saya*, as a formal pronoun, is considered neutral in social connotation. It is the recommended pronoun to be used by learners as it is also the polite form and is more suitable for any situation.

Although some aspects of politeness may be universal in some way, the linguistic expressions of politeness are shaped by the cultural values of each society. In Indonesia itself, by using *saya* instead of *aku*, students can be considered to be polite and teachers would feel that the students appreciate them. It was based upon an experience by the researcher that a lecturer of hers once complained that many students in English Department tend to use *aku* instead of *saya* when they were talking to her. It does not escape the researcher’s attention that this situation is indeed true and she believes that there might be some influences that affecting the use of different choice of first-person pronoun between students and their lecturers.

## Results from Previous Studies

Several studies have also investigated the use of different terms of address in several languages. Saragih (2012), for instance, studied about the practical use of person reference in Papuan Malay. This study found that the use of everyday language is very important to the people, and thus conclude that the issue of power and politeness played an important role in the use of person reference in Papuan Malay language.

More closely related previous studies were conducted by Djenar in 2007 entitled 'Self-reference and Its Variation in Indonesia' and also by Dewi in 2008 about students' and teachers' perception toward the use of *aku* and *saya* in theory and practice. It was shown in Dewi's study, that,

"Regarding the family education, both students and teachers [believe] that most students were told how to use *aku* and *saya* [by] their parents. However, in practice, the percentage of teachers who said that students use the expression *saya* appropriately is lower than that of the students" (Dewi, 2008, p. 9).

Another related result was also found in Djenar's case study, where she claimed that "there is no uniformity in the speakers' choice of term. Some speakers consistently use one term (*saya*), while others shift between two or more terms within the same interview" (Djenar, 2007, p. 38).

The purpose of the Dewi's research was to investigate the different perceptions of students and teachers regarding the use of *aku* and *saya* in theory and practice between teenagers and children whereas Djenar's research examined the use of self-reference and its variation in Indonesia. In Dewi's study, the researcher finds she examines whether there is a significant difference between students and teachers' perception, yet do not discuss it from a different angle, as such the attitudes of the students about the issue.

As proposed by Hosseini and Pourmandnia (2013, p. 63), "the concept of attitudes has been the focus of attention in explanation and investigation of human behavior offered by social psychologists". They believe that attitude is usually defined as a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain thing such as an idea, object, person, or situation. Students have positive or negative attitudes towards the language they want to learn or the people who speak it. Additionally, Gardner (1985) in Hosseini and Pourmandnia (2013) believes that attitude and other affective variables are "as important as aptitude for



language achievement”. Thus, as it has been stated above, attitude is an important key to be addressed in dealing with the situation from university students, especially those in English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University. Therefore, seeing from the explanations above, the researcher is intrigued to look this issue from a different angle, which is about the English Department students’ attitudes in using first-reference of *aku* or *saya* with their lecturers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Setting and Context of the Study**

The present study was qualitative studies that attempt to answer a research question: ‘What are the students’ attitudes toward the use of self-reference *aku* and *saya* in English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University while speaking to their lecturers?’

Seeing from this question, the researcher decided to analyze the attitude of the students because as proposed by Hosseini and Pourmandnia in 2013, students’ attitude is an important key to understand their view upon a pedagogical issue. Furthermore, this issue of self-reference needed to be answered because self-reference could be related with politeness. Politeness is directly related to the norms adopted by Indonesian society, especially in addressing oneself to others (Dewi, 2009). This study was also made to investigate whether there was any significant code selection in the use of *aku* and *saya*.

### **Method**

The method selected by the researcher is descriptive qualitative method. This study was conducted at English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University by choosing a specific batch in English Department, which were 2012 batch, because it was a senior batch and therefore the researcher assumed that the participants would have more experience in communicating with their lecturers.

Furthermore, the participants were divided with some criteria as follows: (a) students who tend to use *aku* or *saya* exclusively when communicating with lecturers, and (b) students who tend to use both *aku* and *saya* when communicating with lecturers. This study used questionnaire to obtain the information and to analyze the important aspects from students’ attitude toward this issue that were adapted from the study of Hosseini et al. (2013) and was supported further by the data from short interview to understand the issue deeper.

## Participants and Data Collection

The participants of this research were students from English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University. The researcher spread questionnaires to 90 students from 2012 batch in English Department to get a valid data and therefore obscurity was avoided in obtaining the data. Then, after analyzing the answers, the researcher selected 6 students who use both *aku* and *saya* to be interviewed. There were several things that the researcher did to collect data, which were:

1. Before proceeding to collecting the data, the researcher did a piloting to 15 participants in order to know the validity of the data.
2. Making an appointment with the lecturers who taught 2012 to spread the questionnaire in the classrooms.
3. Making them filled in the questionnaire and then analyzed it using Excel.
4. Contacting 6 participants who gave their demographical information to be interviewed via chatting (Blackberry Messenger and LINE) because of the limitation of time. All the chatting were captured and translated into English.

## Data Analysis

After obtaining the data, the researcher used a categorical or content/thematic analysis. The researcher took the themes from the questions and the participants' answers from the questionnaires. After completing the stage of data collection, the researcher compiled the data and classified them according to the themes and then analyzed it qualitatively. The result of this study, which was elaborated in four emerging themes, would be used to describe English Department students' attitude toward the use of self-reference *aku* and *saya* with their lecturers.

## Research Instrument

To explore students' attitude toward the use of *aku* and *saya*, the researcher collected the data using questionnaire (Appendix 1) and short semi-structured interview with some participants. According to Zacharias (2013), semi-structured interview is the type of interview which allows greater flexibility within its questions which includes the flexibility to change the order of questions as well as provide opportunity for follow-up questions. The questionnaire was arranged in 3 parts, the first part closed-ended question that was arranged to determine which students use *saya* or *aku* exclusively or both *aku* and *saya*. The second part was open-ended question designed for those who answered *saya* or *aku* exclusively, and

the third part was close-ended and multiple response questions which were designed for those participants who chose both *aku* and *saya* to communicate with the lecturers. Students who chose both *aku* and *saya* were later interviewed briefly to explain their reasons why they use *aku* and *saya* as it had not been provided and answered yet in the questionnaire.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section will address 1) How students refer themselves in front of their lecturers; 2) Students who use *saya* exclusively to the lecturers; 3) Students who use both *aku* and *saya* in front of the lecturers; 4) Students' attitude in using *aku* and *saya*.

### 1. Students' choice of using *aku* or *saya*

#### a. Students who use *saya* exclusively

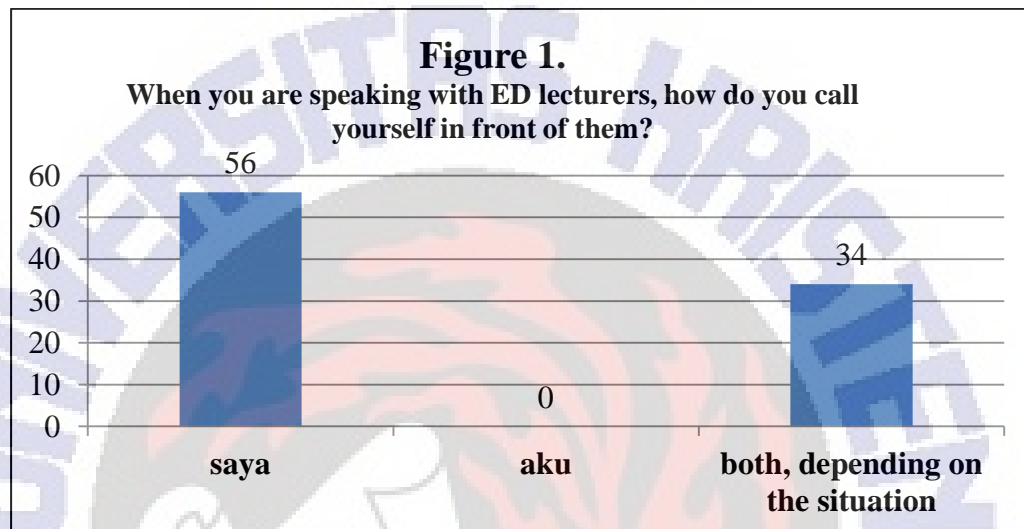


Figure 1 represents multiple answers to divide the participants who use whether *saya*, *aku*, or both. As seen in figure 1, as many as 56 participants used *saya* exclusively when communicating with lecturers. The result seemed to show that the participants are indeed aware of the practice using the formal form of first person reference *saya* in front of their lecturers, although some of them still used the more informal form of practice with their lecturers.



**Figure 2. What is your reason for using 'saya' all the time with ED lecturers? Please, explain clearly.**

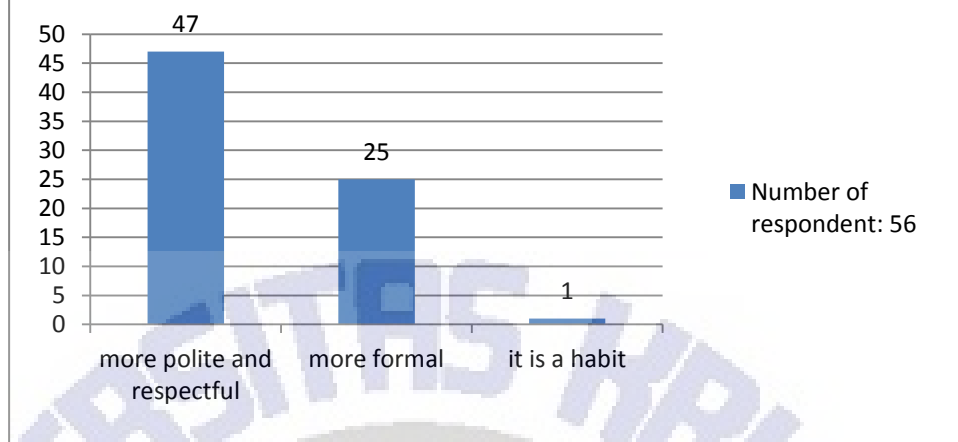


Figure 2 demonstrates the reasons why the participants chose to use *saya* exclusively with their lecturers. The question used to elicit the data was designed into an open-ended one, thus allowing the participants to express their own reasons for using *saya* all the time with lecturers. There were three responses emerging from their answers, as such were said that it was more polite and respectful, more formal, and that it was a habit. From the total of 90 participants, there were 56 participants (62 %) who reported to use *saya* every time they speak with the lecturers.

From this data, there were 47 responses from the participants which said that it is more polite and respectful to use *saya* instead of *aku*. This data could be related with Brown and Levinson's theory (1987), which has claimed that address forms are an integral part of polite language use and therefore they figure prominently in several of the strategies described by politeness theory. As aforementioned in the literature review, *saya* is the recommended pronoun to be used by learners to their teachers as it is also the polite form and is more suitable for any situation.

Furthermore, there were 25 responses who answered that it was more formal to use *saya* instead of *aku*. This data gave clear evidence that the response given by the participants showed that they were indeed aware that *saya* is the more formal form to be used while speaking to the lecturers. According to Dewi (2009, p. 4), "The relationship between students and

teachers are considered to be formal as there is a difference in their age, group, and especially status”. Therefore, *saya* should be used all the time instead of *aku* with lecturers.

Moreover, there is also one response from the correspondence who reports that it was a habit to use *saya* because the respondent was taught by her parents to always use *saya* instead of *aku* in front of their lecturers.

**b. Students who use *aku* exclusively**

As seen in figure 1, none of the respondents reported to use *aku* exclusively when communicating with their lecturers

**2. Students who use both *aku* and *saya* to the faculty’s lecturers**

This section discussed the result from the students who use both *aku* and *saya* to the lecturers.

**a. Students’ preference while speaking with English Department lecturers**

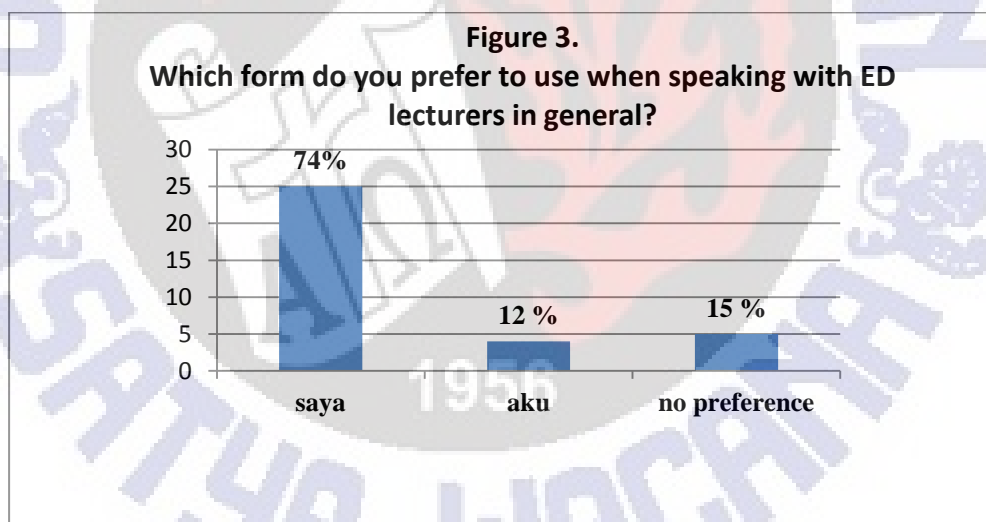


Figure 3 represents the 34 participants out of the total 90 students who answered both *saya* and *aku*. According to the figure 3, it was shown that as many as 25 participants (74 %) reported to use *saya* over *aku*, while 4 participants (12 %) claimed to prefer *aku* over *saya* when speaking with their lecturers and 5 participants (15%) hold no preference toward the practice.

As seen from those participants who preferred to use *saya*, the data had proven that most of the students still aware that *saya* is the polite form to

address their lecturers instead of *aku*. However, seeing from the number of the participants who prefer to use *aku* and those who hold no preference to communicate with lecturers, it was somewhat surprising; because considering that social convention in Indonesia as that *saya* is the appropriate form to be used instead of *aku* for those who have higher status than them. According to Dewi (2009) and Djenar (2007), the use of *aku* is prescriptively incorrect, because it is the informal form to be used when the interlocutors have the same status as the speaker. Thus, *saya* is supposedly the correct form for students to address themselves to their lecturers.

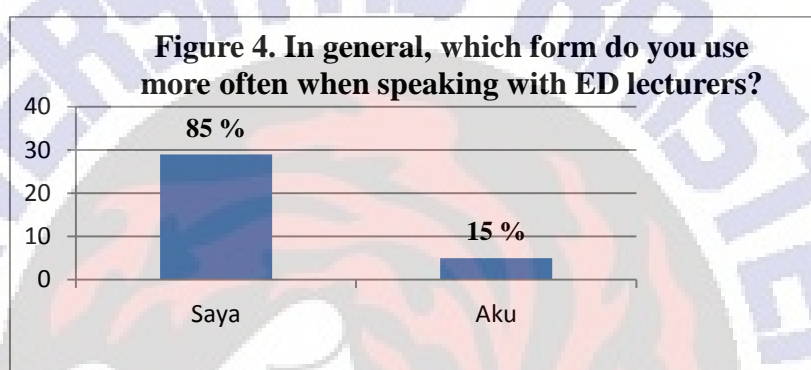
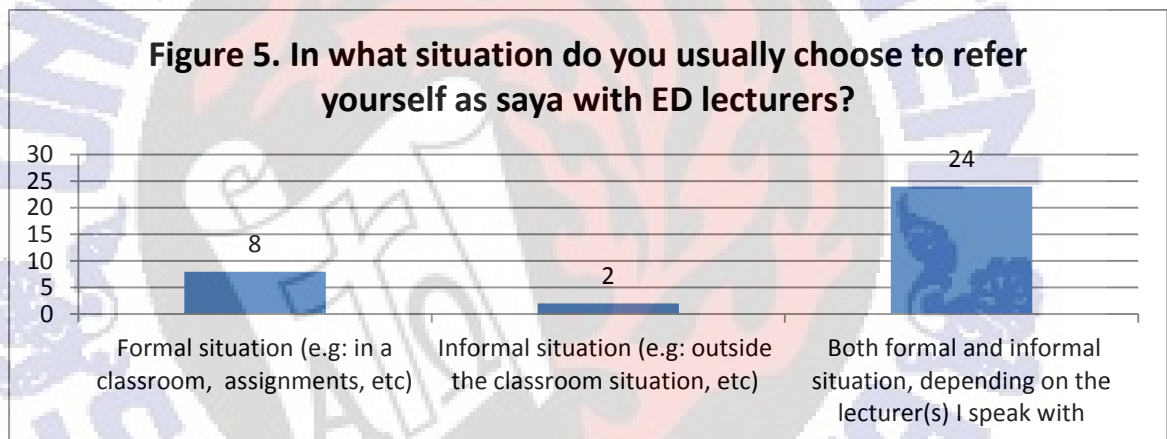


Figure 4 represents there were 34 out of 90 participants who reported to use both *saya* and *aku* with the lecturers and as a response to the question “In general, which form do you use more often when speaking with ED lecturers?” The data showed that there were 29 respondents (85%) who reported to use *saya* more frequently while as many as 5 respondents (15 %) use *aku* more often than *saya*. This result proves that most of the participants still used *saya* more often than *aku*, indicating that they may realize how to address their lecturers. In spite of this data however, the fact that 5 participants still prefer to use *aku* is intriguing because it is uncommon to use *aku* with people who have higher status in Indonesia. Yet *aku*, despite its informality, was still chosen by some students to communicate with their lecturers. Even though the data thus far indicated only 15% of the overall result, it is still significant because traditionally it is unacceptable to use *aku* to lecturers.

**b. Reasons for choosing both *aku* and *saya***

To imlore further, the researcher interviewed 6 participants who use both *aku* and *saya* on why they chose to use *aku* while speaking to the lecturers, there were two answers which emerged from the interview: because of habit and because it can create a friendlier atmosphere while talking to the lecturers. 4 of the participants answered that when they spoke to a friendly lecturers, it was their habit to use *aku* and because the lecturers did not seem to mind. This finding is once again aligned with Holmes (2001, in Dewi, 2007, p. 4) who described that “the closer the relationship between participants, the more informal the language and the content of the conversation”. This section will be further discussed in Figure 6 and 8 below.

**c. The setting in which the students use *saya* when communicating with the lecturers**



This figure is responses to the question “In what situation do you usually choose to refer yourself as *saya* with ED lecturers?” There were 34 out of 90 participants who answered both *aku* and *saya*. According to Figure 5, there were 8 responses from the participants who used *saya* in formal situation, for example when they were in a classroom setting, consulting for assignments, and other formal situations, whereas 2 responses used *saya* in informal situation such as outside the classroom situation. Furthermore, 24 respondents had answered that they use both of the form depends on the teacher to whom they are communicating with. It could be inferred from the data that setting could be one of the factor that influence the students’ preference toward the use of *saya* to the teacher. This data is in accordance with Holmes (2001) and Bonvillain (2013)’s theory which have claimed that



setting is a factor that could influence the language choice by the speakers. Holmes (2001) further stated that relationship and age could also become another factor which influences the choice of language. Therefore, it can be concluded that register factor affects the code selection differently from that in the traditional use of “aku” and “saya”. Unlike recently, in the past, students would use *saya* at all times regardless of where the places were.

**d. The setting in which students use *aku* when communicating with the lecturers**

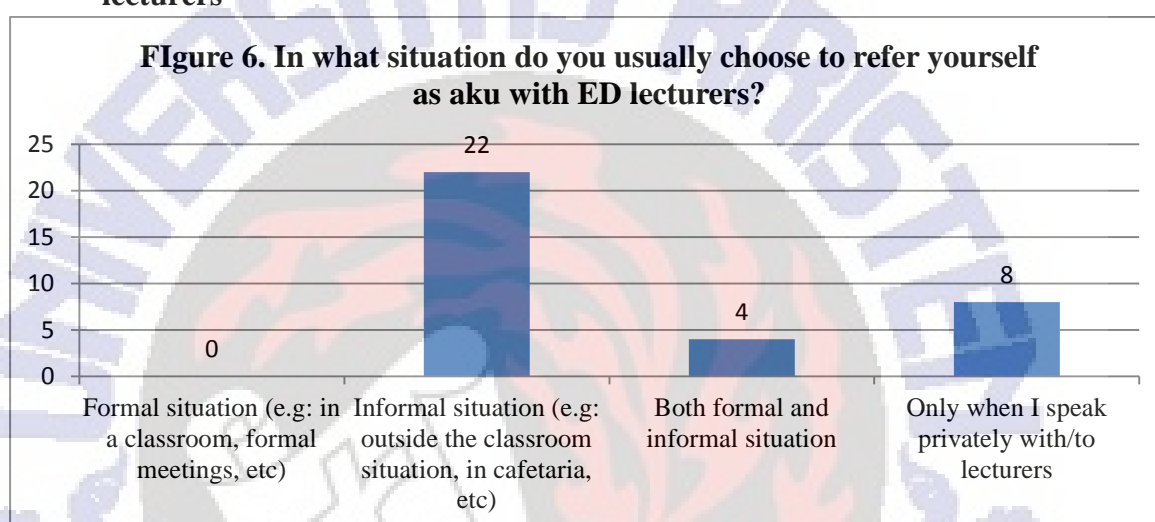


Figure 6 is responses from the question “in what situation do you usually choose to refer yourself as *aku* with ED lecturers?” The participants were 34 students who used both *aku* and *saya*. In contrast from Figure 5; in figure 6, as many as 22 respondents used *aku* in informal situation while speaking with the lecturers, proving once again that setting was one of the factors in the selection of self-reference *aku* or *saya*. However, there were 4 responses which reported to use both formal and informal situation while speaking with the lecturers. To explore further, the researcher asked a respondent the reason why she chose to do so. The answer was given as follow:

“I feel more comfortable while speaking using *aku* with those lecturers that I know well because it sounds friendlier and can reduce the tense atmosphere between me and them,” (Participant number 3).

This finding was interesting since there were, in fact, a number of students who consistently used *aku* in both situations, including in a classroom setting, even though it was prescriptively the wrong way to do so, especially in Indonesian culture.

This only left 8 responses which all of them chose to communicate using *aku* only when they spoke privately with their lecturers. This finding has proved once again that settings affect the relationship between students and the lecturers for the students to use *aku*. This finding is in accordance with Holmes (2001)'s theory, which claimed that the closer the relationship between interlocutors, the more informal the language that was spoken between the participants. This factor could also make the students want to close the social distance between them and then decided to use *aku*.

This result indicates how the relationship between students and lecturers should remain strictly professional, whether it is inside and outside the classroom setting, and thus they should refer themselves as *saya*.

In summary, from the data that have been gathered from Figure 6; it could be inferred that the students might understood the usage of *aku* and *saya*, yet they still used *aku* to refer themselves with the lecturers. The pattern from this figure showed that students tend to used *aku* with the lecturers in informal settings, proving that settings played an important key in students' different selection in code switching. Supporting this statement, Holmes (1992) also claims that people who choose the language or variety when they communicate with each other because of its setting. In other words, this factor will influence the way the language is chosen by the students toward their lecturers. It may depend on the social context or the place where the conversation occurs. For instance, a conversation which occurs in different settings such as office or cafe will also create different situations and conditions, and thus allowing the participants to use different terms of address while addressing themselves as *aku* or *saya* with their lecturers. If compared to the traditional use in terms of address in Indonesia, students used *saya* all the time regardless of their relationship with their lecturers, as using *saya* to address people who have higher status could be regarded as the unwritten social convention in Indonesia, therefore the more acceptable choice to be used instead of *saya*.

- e. Relationship between students and lecturers and how it influences the self-reference choice by the students.

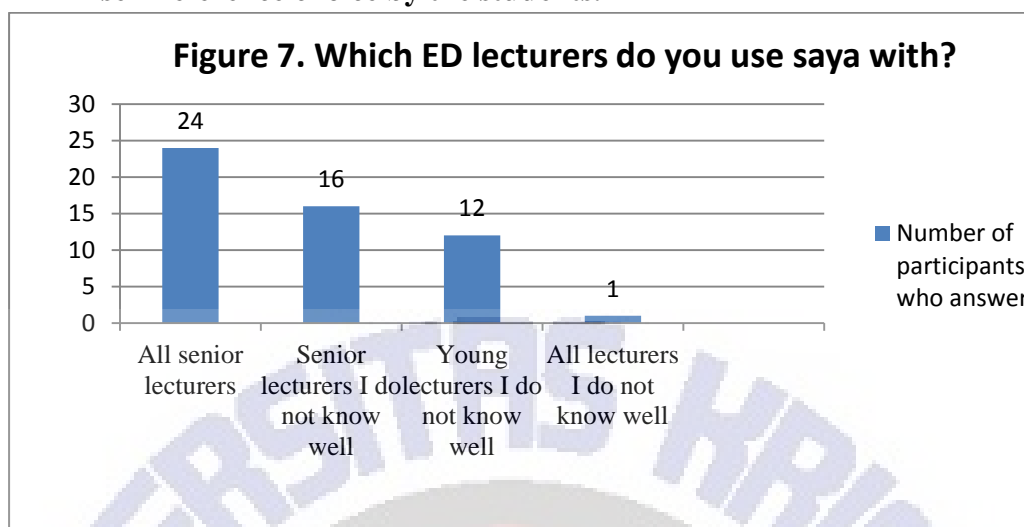


Figure 7 is responses to the question “Which ED lecturers do you use *saya* with?” For the 34 participants who used both *aku* and *saya*. The questionnaire given was in a form of a multiple response choice so the participants could provide more than one answer. Confirming finding in Figure 5, Figure 7 showed that the majority of the participants (24 answers) reported to use *saya* when they spoke with all senior lecturers in English Department.

Table of categorization from participants' responses in Figure 6								
Category	1, 2, & 3	1 & 2	1 & 3	2 & 3	1	2	3 * <sup>1</sup>	4
Answer	5	3	5	1	11	7	1	1

Category	Explanation
1	All senior lecturers
2	Senior lecturers I do not know well
3	Young lecturers I do not know well
4	All lecturers I do not know well

This pattern of the category showed a tendency that the participants chose to use *saya* with lecturers that they did not know well and especially those of senior lecturers, proving that age differences or seniority was one of the factors why the majority of the students chose to refer themselves as *saya* in front of the

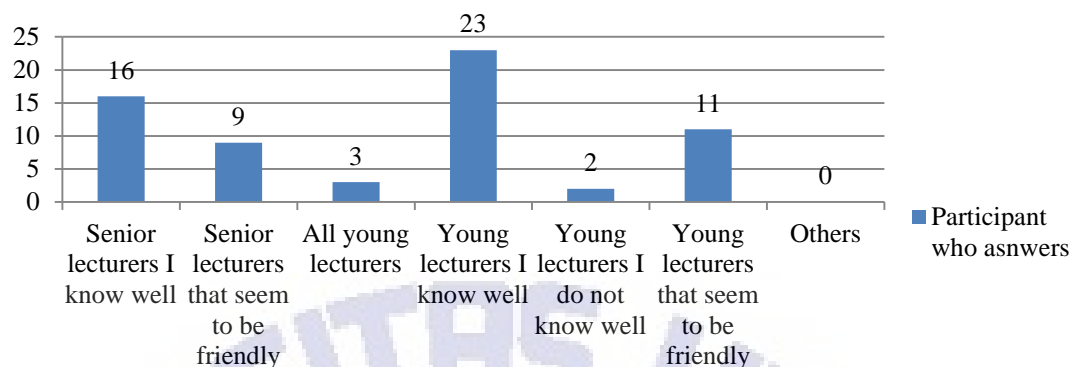
<sup>1</sup>This answer was invalid because the respondent may not have filled in the questionnaire carefully. Therefore to avoid obscurity, this data will not be included in the discussion

lecturers. It turned out that the formal form of self-reference applied in age and seniority factors, and thus proving that even though the results showed the existence of language shifting, the majority of the respondents still showed 'respect' to the senior lecturers by using *saya* in front of them. This use of practice still follows the prescriptive norms of the code selection of *aku* and *saya* in Indonesia, where *saya* should be used prescriptively in front of the lecturers by all students. However, seeing from the data, it was found that some students used *aku* while speaking with their senior lecturers (see Figure 8). This practice is somewhat different than the traditional use of *aku* and *saya* since students used *saya* prescriptively with senior lecturers.

Seeing from the rest of the answers beside all senior lecturers (young and old lecturers they did not know well), the results also demonstrated that proximity between lecturers and students could influence the use of self-reference when the respondents speak both *aku* and *saya* to the lecturers. The majority of the participants who have answered this question claimed that they use *saya* when speaking with lecturers that they did not know well enough. This result of this questionnaire is consistent with a previous study that has been done by Qin (2008, p. 411) who claimed, "Status and intimacy are two factors influencing the choice of address". Furthermore, Holmes (2001) also described that the closer the relationship between participants, the more informal the language that is being used. Therefore, the data shows that relationship between students and the lecturers may influence their habit in choosing different self-reference. In summary, familiarity and seniority were the other factors that influence students' preference to use *saya* in front of the lecturers beside settings.



**Figure 8. If you use *aku* with your lecturers, which of them do you normally use *aku* with?**



Confirming the above finding, Figure 8 shows the students' responses to the question which of the lecturers do the students normally use *aku* with. Figure 8 was taken in a form of multiple set response question so the participants could give more than one answer. As mentioned earlier in Figure 6, the relationship between students and lecturers could be a significant factor on their preference in using self-reference practice.

**Table of Categorization from participants' responses from Figure 8**

Category	1,2	1,4	1,5 * <sup>2</sup>	2,4	1, 2, 4	1,2,4,6	4,6	2,4,6	1,4,6	1,3	1,2,6	1,4,5
Answer	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	1	1

**Table of Categorization from participants' responses from Figure 8**

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Answer	3	1	1	8	0	1	0

Category	Explanation
1	Senior lecturers I know well
2	Senior lecturers that seem to be friendly
3	All young lecturers
4	Young lecturers I know well
5	Young lecturers I did not know well
6	Young lecturers that seem to be friendly
7	Others

<sup>2</sup>This answer was invalid because the respondent may not have filled in the questionnaire carefully. Therefore to avoid obscurity, this data will not be included in the discussion

The pattern of this result showed that the majority of the answers were pointing toward senior lecturers that they know well, young lecturers that they knew well, and young lecturers that seemed to be friendly. This pattern proved that some students used *aku* to those lecturers that they had a degree of familiarity with lecturers who were friendly to them. To summarize, this finding was consistent with their answers on the statement above (see Figure 5), that they used *saya* or *aku* depending on the lecturers they speak with. The results showed a tendency from the participants to refer themselves as *aku* when they were speaking with those lecturers that they knew well, regardless of the teachers' age. This result has proven that relationship is one of the factors why they chose to use *aku* in front of the lecturers. Thus, this finding is in accordance with Holmes (2001) and Badudu (2001)'s theory in Dewi (2009) which discussed that *aku* showed a close relationship between one speaker to another.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate English Department students' attitude toward the use of self-reference *aku* and *saya* toward their lecturers. There were specific factors considered in this research to discuss students' preference toward the use of the self-reference as discussed by Dewi (2009), mainly students' reason in using *aku* or *saya*, their preference, setting, which lecturers they would prefer to speak using *aku* or *saya* with, and relationship between students and the lecturers. In general, the result of this study shows that the majority of the participants use *saya* exclusively and some students have tendency to refer themselves as both *aku* and *saya* in front of their lecturers.

The first finding the researcher finds is 38% of the participants use both *aku* and *saya* with their teachers, whereas 62% use *saya* exclusively. This finding was intriguing because the number of the participants who use both *aku* and *saya* were quite significant if compared to the traditional culture in Indonesia, where students are expected to use *saya* prescriptively with their lecturers. From this result alone, it can be implied that there is a shift of paradigm in students' choice on how they addressed the lecturers from *saya* to *aku*.

Another result indicated that those participants who used *saya* exclusively believed that *saya* is more formal, polite, and respectful to be used in front of the lecturers. One participant also claimed that it was a habit to use *saya* all the time because the said participant was taught by his parents to do so since he was a child.

The next finding is related to those participants who use both self-reference and their preference toward *aku* or *saya*. Based on the data, some of the participants still showed the tendency to prefer *aku* over *saya*. The participants who chose to use *aku* mostly argued that they felt more comfortable to communicate with their lecturers because it sounded friendlier to do so. Furthermore, some participants also claimed that it was their habit to speak *aku* because nobody had ever mentioned anything to them. As a result, often when they talked to the lecturers, they used *aku* reflexively.

The researcher also found that setting is one of the factors influencing students to speak *aku* or *saya*. From the results in which the students use *saya*, they mostly used it in both formal and situation, depending on the lecturers they spoke with. In the situation where students used *aku*, they mostly chose to use *aku* only when the setting was informal (cafeteria, outside the classroom, etc) and when spoke privately to the lecturers. As stated by Holmes (2001) and Bonvillain (2013), setting is a factor that could influence the language choice by the speakers.

To explore further, the researcher also investigated students' relationship with the lecturers to understand further whether relationship could be a factor that influence students' attitude in using *aku* and *saya*. From the results when they used *aku*, the answers showed a pattern where participants chose to use *saya* with lecturers that they did not know well and especially those of senior lecturers, proving that age differences or seniority was one of the factors why some students chose to refer themselves as *saya* in front of the lecturers. Furthermore, when they used *aku*, the pattern showed that some students used it to those lecturers that they are familiar with with and lecturers who are friendly to them. These findings are in accordance with Holmes (2001)'s theory, that age difference and relationship are also factors that can influence different language choice by the speakers.

From the participants who showed tendency to use both *aku* and *saya*, it is clear that the process of language shift in case of communicating with lecturers is evident here. The data has shown participants' tendency to use *aku* in several occasions, suggesting a significant overall shift of code selection with the lecturers. As already noted, this process of language shifting must be viewed with caution as the use of self-reference between students and teachers have inevitably changed from the traditional rules where students must use *saya* exclusively to their teachers.

At last, the limitation of this study is that this is a new topic of research and it was held only in a small scope area where the participants were 2012 batch from English Department. Therefore, the results could not be generalized to wider scope that is the university context. The researcher would suggest that a study with wider scope is therefore necessary. Further studies of this topic may include students from a different batch in university level to delve deeper into this topic.



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## APPENDIX 1

### English Department Students' Attitude in Using First-Person Addressing Terms of *Aku* and *Saya* to English Department Lecturers

Dear fellow ED students,

My name is Venny Christayani from 2012 batch of English Department Satya Wacana Christian University. I made this questionnaire to explore ED students' attitudes in using first-person addressing terms of *aku* and *saya* to ED lecturers. I would really appreciate if you could participate by answering the questions. Feel free to give your opinion because there is no right and wrong answer. You can also write your responses in Indonesian if you would like to. Your answers will not affect your grade. Please, answer this questionnaire **honestly** to make the data accountable. Thank you very much for your participation!

Venny Christayani R.

#### THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the answers you choose.

#### PART A

1. (Q 1) When you are speaking with ED lecturers, how do you call yourself in front of them? Do you use *saya* or *aku*?
  - a. Saya
  - b. Aku
  - c. Both, depending on the situation

**If you chose option (a) *saya* or (b) *aku*, please go to Part B. If you chose (c) - *both, depending on the situation*, please go straight to Part C.**

#### PART B

2. What is your reason for using 'saya' or 'aku' (just one of these) all the time with ED lecturers? Please, explain clearly.

.....

.....

.....

.....

**PART C**(Only if you use both “aku” dan “saya” to ED lecturers)

3. Which form do you prefer to use when speaking with ED lecturers in general?
  - a. Saya
  - b. Aku
  - c. No preference
4. In general, which form do you use more often when speaking with ED lecturers?
  - a. Saya
  - b. Aku
5. In what situation do you usually choose to refer yourself as *saya* with ED lecturers?
  - a. Formal situation (e.g: in a classroom, assignments, etc)
  - b. Informal situation (e.g: outside the classroom situation, etc)
  - c. Both formal and informal situation, depending on the lecturer(s) I speak with
6. Which ED lecturers do you use *saya* with? (You can choose more than one answer)
  - a. All senior lecturers
  - b. Senior lecturers I do not know well
  - c. Young lecturers I do not know well
  - d. Others (please specify): .....
7. In what situation do you usually choose to refer yourself as *aku* with ED lecturers?
  - a. Formal situation (e.g: in a classroom, formal meetings, etc)
  - b. Informal situation (e.g: outside the classroom situation, when speaking privately, etc)
  - c. Both formal and informal situation
  - d. Only when I speak privately with/to lecturers
8. If you use *aku* with your lecturers, which of them do you normally use *aku* with? (You can choose more than one answer)
  - a. Senior lecturers I know well
  - b. Senior lecturers that seem to be friendly
  - c. All young lecturers
  - d. Young lecturers I know well
  - e. Young lecturers I do not know well
  - f. Young lecturers that seem to be friendly
  - g. Others (please specify): .....

**I. Demographic information**

Age: .....

Gender: Male / Female (circle accordingly)

Batch (*angkatan*): .....

Place of origin (city/province): ...../.....

## II. Consent Form

May I contact you for an interview if I need more information to your answers?  
Yes / No (circle one)

If you say Yes, please complete the following information:

Name: .....

Cell phone number: .....

Email: .....

**Thanks again for your participation. God bless you ☺**

